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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MAPUTO 001304

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SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE - FRELIMO GROWING STRONGER

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Classified By: CDA Elizabeth Raspolic for reason 1.4(b/d)

Summary

¶1. (C) President Guebuza has been aggressively promoting the influence of the ruling party FRELIMO since taking office. This strategy appears to be paying off. In the latest in a spate of reports since the spring of members from the main opposition party, RENAMO, deserting to FRELIMO, according to press reports on October 5 Vitor Duarte, the RENAMO businessman who "helped deliver" Zambezia province for RENAMO in 1999 and 2004, has allied himself with FRELIMO. As FRELIMO's power grows, there is increasing concern that its dominance will give it unchecked control over the state and that Mozambique could eventually end up as a multi-party democracy in name only. End Summary.

Influential Backer Switches Parties

¶2. (U) On October 5 the weekly Zambeze, considered one of Mozambique's most independent and reliable journals, carried a story about the defection of prominent Zambezia province businessman, Vitor Duarte, from RENAMO, Mozambique's main opposition party, to the ruling party FRELIMO. Duarte, according to the article, helped deliver the province for RENAMO in both the 1999 and 2004 elections. As Mozambique's second most populous province, Zambezia's votes accounted for a sizable proportion of overall Mozambican support for RENAMO in those elections. Duarte told reporters that he decided to quit RENAMO because RENAMO was "disorganized" and "doing nothing to stimulate the development of the country." He qualified his switch by saying that although he was backing FRELIMO, he was not an "effective member" in the way that he had been for RENAMO. Zambeze reported, however, that rumors are circulating in Zambezia that Duarte changed sides after the government offered to return to him several houses that had been nationalized in the 1970,s.

¶3. (U) There have been a number of noteworthy defections from RENAMO to FRELIMO since the spring. In April Saide Assane, who had been the losing RENAMO candidate in the hotly contested election for mayor last year in the provincial town

of Mocimboa da Praia (reftel), announced that he was joining FRELIMO. The media speculated that by doing so he escaped prosecution for any role he might have played in subsequent riots in the town in September 2005, in which a dozen people died, and that he may have also been financially rewarded. In July the former RENAMO party secretary for Maputo province, Adelina Matule, announced that she, too, was abandoning the party in favor of FRELIMO, in a ceremony attended by 16 other former RENAMO members at FRELIMO's party headquarters in Matola, outside Maputo. In September FRELIMO announced another 12 former RENAMO members switched sides, including the former "chief of mobilization" for RENAMO of the RENAMO-governed municipality of Ilha de Mozambique.

FRELIMO Applies Full Court Press

¶4. (SBU) While courting members of the opposition, the FRELIMO powerful, in particular President Guebuza, have been aggressively targeting the general electorate in a concerted push to promote the party. Guebuza set the pattern early on, touring the length of the country in the weeks after assuming office in February 2005 to "thank the people" for voting for FRELIMO. In December 2005 Guebuza called an "expanded cabinet meeting," inviting also prominent academics and civil society leaders -- all FRELIMO party members, where it was decided that the 9th Party Congress would be moved up a year to 2006 instead of 2007. Ostensibly this was done to give FRELIMO members more time to prepare for the 2009 general elections but also, it seems, this was a way to remind the populace as early as possible of the important role of the party apparatus on the national scene. In January FRELIMO announced the beginning of a drive to re-certify FRELIMO membership rolls, a program which is still ongoing. According to several press reports, there is increasing

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evidence that people feel pressure to become party members to secure or retain government employment. In March 2006, while touring the provinces to learn about local concerns, Guebuza took in tow FRELIMO provincial party secretaries wherever he went so that they would ensure the people credited FRELIMO for government programs.

¶5. (U) Senior FRELIMO officials recently have been caught up in preparations for the 9th Party Congress, scheduled for November 10-14, in a way not seen since the days of Mozambique's first president, Samora Machel (president from independence in 1975 until his death in 1986). In September Guebuza convened a second "expanded Cabinet meeting", including this time FRELIMO party officials from the provinces, for further planning for the upcoming 9th Congress. Since the middle of September virtually every member of Guebuza's cabinet has been dispatched to the provinces at one time or another to oversee the selection of delegates to the 9th Congress. The choice of Quelimane, the capital of pro-RENAMO Zambezia province, as the site for the 9th Congress highlights the importance FRELIMO sees in attracting supporters and undermining RENAMO's authority on RENAMO's home turf.

Background - The Fright of 1999

¶6. (C) This increasing assertiveness by FRELIMO originated with the shock the party received when it nearly lost the 1999 general election (which some observers believe RENAMO actually won). Once the votes were tallied and President Chissano safely re-elected, the FRELIMO core leadership held a series of urgent meetings to discuss how to restore the party's appeal. At stake was not just FRELIMO's political power but, more importantly for many, the wealth senior party officials had accumulated, both of which risked being lost by

a RENAMO takeover. Discussions in party corridors focused on the need for new leadership that would reactivate party cells throughout the country, expand membership rolls, restore faith in the party, and above all remove any prospect of a RENAMO victory for the foreseeable future. The demand for new leadership accelerated with the embarrassing involvement of Nypine Chissano, the son of then-president Joaquim Chissano, in the murder trial of those responsible for killing investigative journalist Carlos Cardoso in 2000. To revive FRELIMO, party officials convinced President Chissano not to run again and chose Guebuza in an extraordinary Central Committee meeting in 2002, two years prior to the 2004 elections. Although the FRELIMO elite were openly nervous about the outcome of the 2004 elections, they needn't have worried. In the end, many RENAMO supporters stayed home (partly owing to the fact that RENAMO leader Dhlakama hardly campaigned at all and partly from disillusionment with the 1999 loss), enabling Guebuza and FRELIMO to garner over 60 percent of the votes.

Dhlakama's Reaction - Tame by Comparison

¶7. (SBU) In the face of the FRELIMO juggernaut, Dhlakama and the RENAMO leadership have tried to fight back. In September the RENAMO senior officials met in Beira and announced that their next party congress would take place in the first half of 2007. In apparent reaction to FRELIMO's choice of "their" city of Quelimane, they said the congress would take place in Nampula, the large capital of Nampula province where FRELIMO's support is roughly equal to RENAMO's. Dhlakama admitted that RENAMO had been "apathetic" lately under his leadership, but promised to revitalize the party in coming months. Simultaneously, however, several important former RENAMO members in Manica province announced they were forming a "RENAMO Salvation Junta" and called on Dhlakama to step down. They argued that RENAMO had no future under Dhlakama, and that the longer he stayed on the weaker the party became. RENAMO spokesman Fernando Mazanga retorted that the "Junta" leaders were not RENAMO members (Note - they left RENAMO several years ago. They are influential leaders in Manica, however. End Note) and therefore would be ignored.

Is Mozambique's Multi-party Status at Risk?

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¶8. (C) Consultants hired by the British AID agency, DFID, recently wrote up a "risk assessment" of Mozambique and concluded: "Despite the appearance of a multi-party state, in practice Mozambique is controlled by an oligarchy within the ruling party..." At a private party in mid-September, a senior Mozambican journalist, Savana editor Fernando Lima (please protect), told emboff that FRELIMO's grip everywhere was tightening and this represented a "real danger." Echoing what we have heard about it being increasingly difficult to find work without being a FRELIMO member (Lima said getting a government job without FRELIMO membership was "impossible"), he added that it was not too far fetched to imagine FRELIMO one day dictating membership of local NGO's. In an extensive interview in the weekly O PAIS on September 29, Raul Domingos, the head of the PDD party (and the distant third-place finisher in the 2004 presidential election) said he foresaw a return to "monopartyism." He pointed to the real danger that in the wake of the 2009 elections FRELIMO would hold more than two-thirds of the seats in the National Assembly (it now holds 160 out of 250), and then it would be able to freely amend the constitution.

Comment

19. (C) (Begin Comment) FRELIMO's 9th Party Congress looks set to be a watershed event for Mozambique's young democracy. Guebuza will likely use the Congress to shore up support within FRELIMO against rivals, particularly those in former president Joaquim Chissano's camp and backers of Samora Machel's widow (and wife of Nelson Mandela) Graca Machel. All factions are likely to unite, however, around calls for deepening FRELIMO's control of the state and its power vis-a-vis rival parties. The opposition appears to offer no credible alternative to FRELIMO at this time. (End Comment)
Raspolic